

criminal background checks under Federal law. In the aftermath of the atrocity in Orlando, Deputy Attorney General Yates noted that the Justice Department “would have liked to have known” that Omar Mateen had gone to purchase an assault rifle.

Our Constitution protects the fundamental individual right to bear arms, but no freedom is absolute, and no one amendment can subvert all the others. Orlando deserved to have the security of a functioning universal background check system that keeps guns out of the hands of people known to be dangerous. So, too, do the people of my hometown of Wilmington.

Earlier this week, late Tuesday night, in my hometown of Wilmington, less than a block away from a business owned by one of my treasured staff members, four young teenagers, ages 12, 13, 15, and 16, were shot. The 15-year-old boy remains in critical condition in Christiana Hospital. He was shot in the stomach, hand, and leg.

Earlier this week in Wilmington, a 15-year-old girl was shot during an argument at a party. There have been so many instances of gun violence on the streets of my hometown in the weeks and months of this year, last year, and the year before that we have become numb to it. We have almost lost count of them. Yet this daily carnage continues in my hometown and in towns all across this country.

Orlando deserves the amount of attention it has received as one of the worst mass American atrocities occurring in history. Yet we cannot forget the week-in and week-out tragedies where one, two, and three individuals are shot in what now seems to be, sadly, routine gun violence all across this country.

We have heard in speeches given by my colleagues about incidents all over our country. From Orlando to San Bernardino to Newtown, from Wilmington to Chicago to Los Angeles, Americans fall victim to gun violence each and every day. It doesn't have to be this way.

Americans are 25 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than people in any other developed country. We can and we must do more to prevent senseless acts of gun violence.

So today, this week, we mourn the lives taken from us too soon in Orlando, and I mourn and many of my neighbors and constituents mourn the lives lost in Wilmington. But we all pray that the families and friends grieving the loss of their loved ones will find strength and purpose in the days to come and will bring encouragement from actions by this Senate.

Tragedies like these don't just draw our attention, don't just hold our gaze, and don't just break our hearts; they also challenge our values as a nation. In response to the atrocities in Orlando, America's message to the world must not be one of fear and anger and isolation as some propose. Instead, I think we can and should take action to

protect all of our citizens of any ethnicity, any faith, and any sexual orientation with commonsense gun legislation. I am encouraged to know there have been filed bills that this body will take up and act upon next week and that my colleagues, Senators MURPHY and FEINSTEIN, have been able to submit for consideration by this body—bills relating to background checks and to closing the terror gap that I look forward to supporting next week when we return.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues of both parties who have advanced proposals or have come to the floor to participate in an important effort to show the people across the country that we can work across the aisle, that we can listen to each other, and that we can, I hope, legislate.

I specifically thank my colleague Senator MURPHY for his discipline, his engagement, and his work in an important filibuster to show the people of our country that we are listening, we are paying attention, we are working, and we will soon take action.

With that, I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING MARY D. FERGUSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to share with my colleagues the very sad news that Mary D. Ferguson, a legendary Kentucky journalist and a good friend of mine, has passed away. She departed this life last Thursday, June 9, in the town of Hopkinsville, KY, at the age of 82. She will be remembered and greatly missed by her family, many friends, and journalists throughout the Commonwealth.

Mary was a pioneer as a female journalist in an era when women were not expected to enter that profession, but she did not let that deter her from doing what she had dreamed of since childhood. She got her first job in journalism when she was a freshman in college, working as the society editor at the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle.

She also served as the news director for a Hopkinsville radio station, WHOP, before being hired as a reporter by the Kentucky New Era in 1962. There she remained for more than 50 years—as a reporter, columnist, and eventually as an unofficial historian for the region and fount of institutional knowledge for the newspaper. By the time she passed away, of course, she had been working there since before most of her coworkers were born.

Mary touched the lives of thousands in Kentucky and beyond with her work

for the New Era. Her stories gave voice to the people of her community, and she brought events of the world home for her readers. In covering events at Fort Campbell, KY, she wrote about Presidents spanning from Lyndon Johnson to George W. Bush. She covered gubernatorial inaugurations, crime, the courts, elections, and the arts.

I got to know Mary back when I was first elected to statewide office. She interviewed me and was a part of editorial board meetings, which I frequently held with the New Era. Mary was a rarity in the fact that she was one of the few journalists who leaned Republican, although she always kept her reporting balanced. I certainly appreciated her support and encouragement throughout the years and grew to have great admiration and respect for this woman who was not afraid to chart her own path.

Mary was the heart of the New Era newspaper and will be deeply missed by her colleagues and the hundreds of journalists who passed through that publication's offices over the five decades of her tenure. The paper established in 2005 the Mary D. Ferguson Award, given annually to the employee most committed to the quality of the newspaper. That tradition will continue after her death.

Kentucky has lost one of its leading lights in journalism, and I have lost a friend. Elaine and I want to express our deepest condolences to Mary's family. She is survived by her husband, retired Kentucky State Police Trooper Russell Ferguson, her daughter Lee Ellen Ferguson Fish, and two grandchildren. Along with the Hopkinsville community, we stand by the Ferguson family and support them in their time of grief.

The newspaper Mary Ferguson wrote for for 54 years, the New Era, published a remarkable article detailing her life and career. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Kentucky New Era, June 10, 2016]

TRAILBLAZING JOURNALIST, MARY D.

FERGUSON, DIES AT 82

(By Jennifer P. Brown)

HOPKINSVILLE, KY.—Mary D. Ferguson, a Kentucky New Era staff writer and columnist who covered stories about farmers, housewives, Army generals, American presidents and much more in a career lasting more than 50 years, died Thursday morning at a Hopkinsville nursing home. She was 82.

A native of Trenton and longtime resident of Pembroke Road, she lived just a few miles from the newspaper. She is survived by her husband, retired Kentucky State Police Trooper Russell Ferguson, and their daughter, Lee Ellen Ferguson Fish.

Ferguson was a trailblazer for women in news reporting.

A 1952 graduate of Trenton High School in Todd County, she moved to Clarksville when she started college at Austin Peay State University. In the spring of her freshman year, she applied for the society editor's job at the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle newspaper

and was hired on the spot. Years later, she said she was shocked to get the job, but she stayed with the newspaper until a year after she graduated.

She then became the news director for WHOP. Walking from store to store in downtown Hopkinsville, she delivered the radio station's daily Shell-O-Gram, a promotional flyer for Shell Oil that featured news headlines of the day. The radio station, which was on South Virginia Street, had a mobile unit set up in a station wagon, and Ferguson also broadcast live stories from the field.

The New Era hired her on February 5, 1962, to cover crime, courts and Fort Campbell. She was the first female reporter in the newsroom.

Although the paper's owners had recruited her, it took a while for the men in the newsroom to accept Ferguson. Reminiscing last fall about her start at the New Era, she remembered how her news judgment and writing style were frequently criticized early on. Things began to shift in her favor one day when a local judge publicly praised one of her stories.

Ferguson was on a first-name basis with several commanding generals, and their family members, at Fort Campbell. She also covered Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush at Fort Campbell or nearby communities. She filed stories from the inaugurations of two Kentucky governors, Edward T. "Ned" Breathitt and Louie B. Nunn.

She loved the arts and was granted a backstage interview with the opera singer Marian Anderson at Fish University in Nashville. Ferguson was so overcome with appreciation that she broke down and cried as she approached the celebrity.

As a general assignment reporter, Ferguson wrote a wide range of stories, including murder investigations, businesses opening and closing, fatal crashes, hospital expansions, lawsuits, tobacco auctions, elections, floods, fires, high school graduations, concerts and the deaths of many friends.

Ferguson was among the New Era reporting team that covered the aftermath of the Gander, Newfoundland, crash in December 1985 that killed 248 soldiers headed back to Fort Campbell after a six-month deployment to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. She was at Fort Campbell the day President Ronald Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan came to the post to console the families.

She rejected the idea of ever retiring, although she did eventually scale back her hours and devoted her time mainly to writing daily obituaries and a popular human-interest column that ran on Saturdays. Even when cancer treatments made it difficult for her to type, she continued to dictate a weekly column to another staff member.

She was rare among journalists with a career spanning more than 60 years at two newspapers and the radio station.

No one working in the New Era's newsroom today had been born when Ferguson started working for the paper at its old offices in downtown Hopkinsville. She experienced numerous changes in the newspaper industry. She gave up her typewriter for computers but never really accepted the internet as a useful tool.

New Era Publisher Taylor Hayes said he thought of Ferguson as the newspaper's "matriarch." Employees counted on her frank opinion and advice.

"This classy lady provided such a footing to our company, particularly in the newsroom, and her absence cannot be easily grasped," Hayes said. "She was a rock."

Ferguson drove a red Cadillac, voted Republican, loved big friendly dogs, fed bread to fat squirrels in her yard, laughed often,

cooked like a pro and remembered names and old tales that others forgot. She missed restaurants like Charlie's Steakhouse and Bartholomew's when they closed. She was partial to the Whistle Stop's chocolate glazed doughnuts. Sushi and egg rolls were not her thing.

She wore tailored dresses, cardigan sweaters, high heels and pearls to work. When the newsroom eventually went smoke-free, she took her cigarette breaks wearing a mink coat on the newspaper's loading dock, where she was likely to collect a few story ideas from the pressmen or a truck driver.

While the newsroom became younger and increasingly reliant on the internet, she packed her desk drawers with old city directories, history books and paper files. She could put her hands on a photograph of an old general before a young editor could even begin the search on Google.

No one covering news in Hopkinsville today—not at the newspaper and not at any of the radio stations—could match her institutional knowledge of people and events that shaped southern Pennyrile communities over the past 80 years.

"There are a rare class of people who, when they come into your life, however it may be, you just feel lucky to have known them," Editor Eli Pace said. "Mary D. was tough as nails, classy beyond description and just wonderful—and I was lucky."

She was opinionated too. Once, when a new editor announced that the New Era would begin re-running obituaries every time the newspaper or a funeral home made a mistake because readers liked to clip them out for family records, Ferguson snapped, "What are we, a newspaper or a scrapbook company?"

Ferguson, who sometimes prayed for friends and co-workers from her front porch swing in the evening, believed that her best writing at the New Era came in a Christmas Eve column she wrote about her father's dairy barn.

The column included this: "My memories were born in a stable located on a hill just north of Trenton near the Todd-Christian county line. The wide front door opened to the southwestern sky, and at night there was a star spectacle that outshone the blinking of multi-colored Christmas lights wrapped around a tree and bushes . . . The warmth, the smells, the sound of a soft wind and stars in the sky—no greater peace could be enjoyed."

Ferguson's last column was about the arrival of the first hummingbird to her house at 2:30 p.m. April 16. Ever the reporter, she had recorded the exact time and day.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID MEDINE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the past 3 years, David Medine has served as chairman of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, PCLOB—the first chairman finally to be confirmed after Congress reestablished the PCLOB as an independent agency and strengthened its authority. Under his leadership, the PCLOB has worked diligently to review surveillance programs and make recommendations to protect individual privacy and civil liberties. Mr. Medine recently announced that he will be leaving government service to join a nonprofit organization that serves low-income and disadvantaged individuals. He will be missed.

Mr. Medine was confirmed at a critical time, just a month before the first Snowden revelations in June 2013. In response to reports that the NSA had

been collecting Americans' phone records in bulk for years under section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act, he guided the PCLOB's work in reviewing that program and releasing a comprehensive report in January 2014. The recommendations in that landmark report included ending the bulk collection of Americans' phone records, installing an amicus at the FISA Court, and instituting a number of other privacy protections. Many of these recommendations were subsequently enacted into law in the bipartisan USA FREEDOM Act of 2015.

Under Mr. Medine's leadership, the PCLOB also released a detailed unclassified report in July 2014 on surveillance conducted pursuant to section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which is slated to expire at the end of next year. This report includes a valuable unclassified explanation of the implementation of section 702. These reports and Mr. Medine's related testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee have been tremendously beneficial to Congress and the American people in examining government surveillance programs.

Mr. Medine's public service spans more than 20 years. Over the course of his career, he has earned a reputation as a thoughtful and well-respected authority on privacy and data security issues. I commend Mr. Medine for his dedicated public service and efforts to protect the privacy and civil liberties of the American people, and I wish him well in this new chapter.

(At the request of Mr. BURR, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I am a proud cosponsor of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, a bill that would help Americans in the fight against the opioid and heroin epidemic sweeping across our Nation. Due to the Orlando tragedy that took place on Sunday, I was unable to be present today to vote in favor of going to conference on CARA to finalize the legislation and further assist Americans in their battle against addiction. If I were present during the vote, I would have voted in favor of going to conference on CARA. •

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I wish to enter into a colloquy with my colleague from Arizona.

The National Defense Authorization Act which the Senate passed this week is the most critical piece of legislation for our national security that we debate each year, and I thank my colleague from Arizona, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, for his hard work on this legislation.

One important provision that should be in the final NDAA is the elevation of